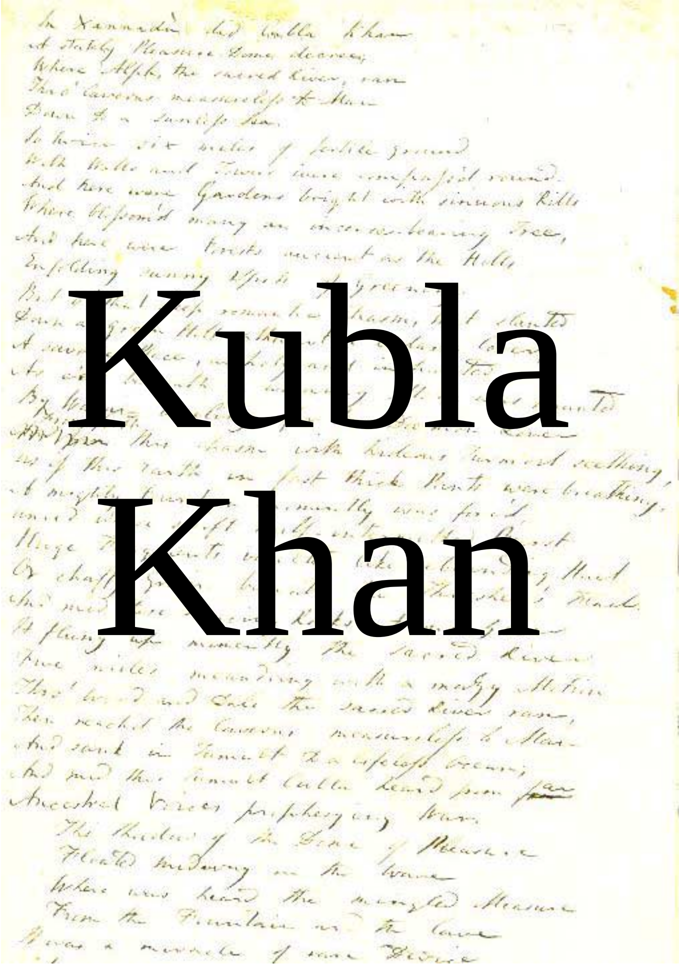


Kubla Khan

poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

music by Philip Legge

for harp (or keyboard), 2 flutes, mixed-voice choir, and soprano solo

http://www.carringbush.net/~pml/music/

This printing March 9 2005

Kubla Khan

Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan* is an unsettling glimpse of the poet’s unconscious as well as a vivid and evocative set of dreamlike images. The story of how it came to be written is well-known; the visions in a dream inspired by reading a passage of *Purchas’s Pilgrimage* relating the construction of the Khan’s palace (and possibly influenced by laudanum) might have resulted in a poem of two or three hundred lines had not Coleridge been interrupted by the infamous “man from Porlock”. We are left instead with a fleeting spiral of fragmentary images and ideas that never seem to connect. A fragment of Coleridge’s Fragment appears on the cover (Add. MS 50847, f. 1v).

The obvious inspiration for the harp accompaniment is the first line of the final stanza, “A damsel with a dulcimer”, and the instrumental trio of a harp and two flutes is not completely unknown. The keyboard part is a transcription of the harp part suitable for rehearsal with piano. A proper orchestral double harp is preferred for performance, however an electronic keyboard with a full set of octaves and capable of producing a decent harp-like timbre may prove adequate (as well as overcoming the harp’s limitations in rapid changes of tuning), especially if the choir is comparatively large.

Programme Notes by the composer:

“The poem ‘*Kubla Khan*’ by Coleridge has been a favourite of mine for many years, but the inspiration to set it to music – originally for female voices with harp accompaniment – came to me on a holiday a couple of years ago, when I scribbled down a fragmentary page or two.

“Coleridge had been in self-imposed retreat at a country farm-house when he wrote the poem, and had been taking opium purportedly as a relief for some illness, so after reading a travel book with an exotic description of Kublai Khan’s palace, he had an extremely vivid poetic dream. Unfortunately after he awoke he was interrupted while in the middle of writing it all down, and later on he couldn’t remember the poem or the dream; so what little of the poem that remains is very evocative.

“Unlike Coleridge I can’t claim to have been inspired by an opium-influenced dream, but most of that musical fragment I wrote has found its way into the current composition in one form or another. The poem – and my music as well – consists of a dreamy and kaleidoscopic series of images and motifs, some of which recur and connect overtly or subliminally. The impetus of a performance led me to expand the work to incorporate two flutes as well as full mixed-voice choir, and a small solo for soprano.”

Kubla Khan received its premiére at the Kaleide Theatre, RMIT University, Melbourne, on June 4, 2004.
Flutes: Karl Billeter, Nick Adler
Soprano solo: Sarah Chan
Keyboard (quasi arpa): Michael Winikoff
The RMIT Occasional Choral Society (ROCS), conducted by Philip Legge

Please send comments by electronic mail to phi1ip AT netscape DOT net

Kubla Khan

(Or, a vision in a dream. A fragment)

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
        Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:
And ‘mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And ‘mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

        The shadow of the dome of pleasure
        Floated midway on the waves:
        Where was heard the mingled measure
        From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

        A damsel with a dulcimer
        In a vision once I saw:
        It was an Abyssinian maid,
        And on her dulcimer she played,
        Singing of Mount Abora.
        Could I revive within me
        Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ‘twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798

Kubla Khan

(2003/4)

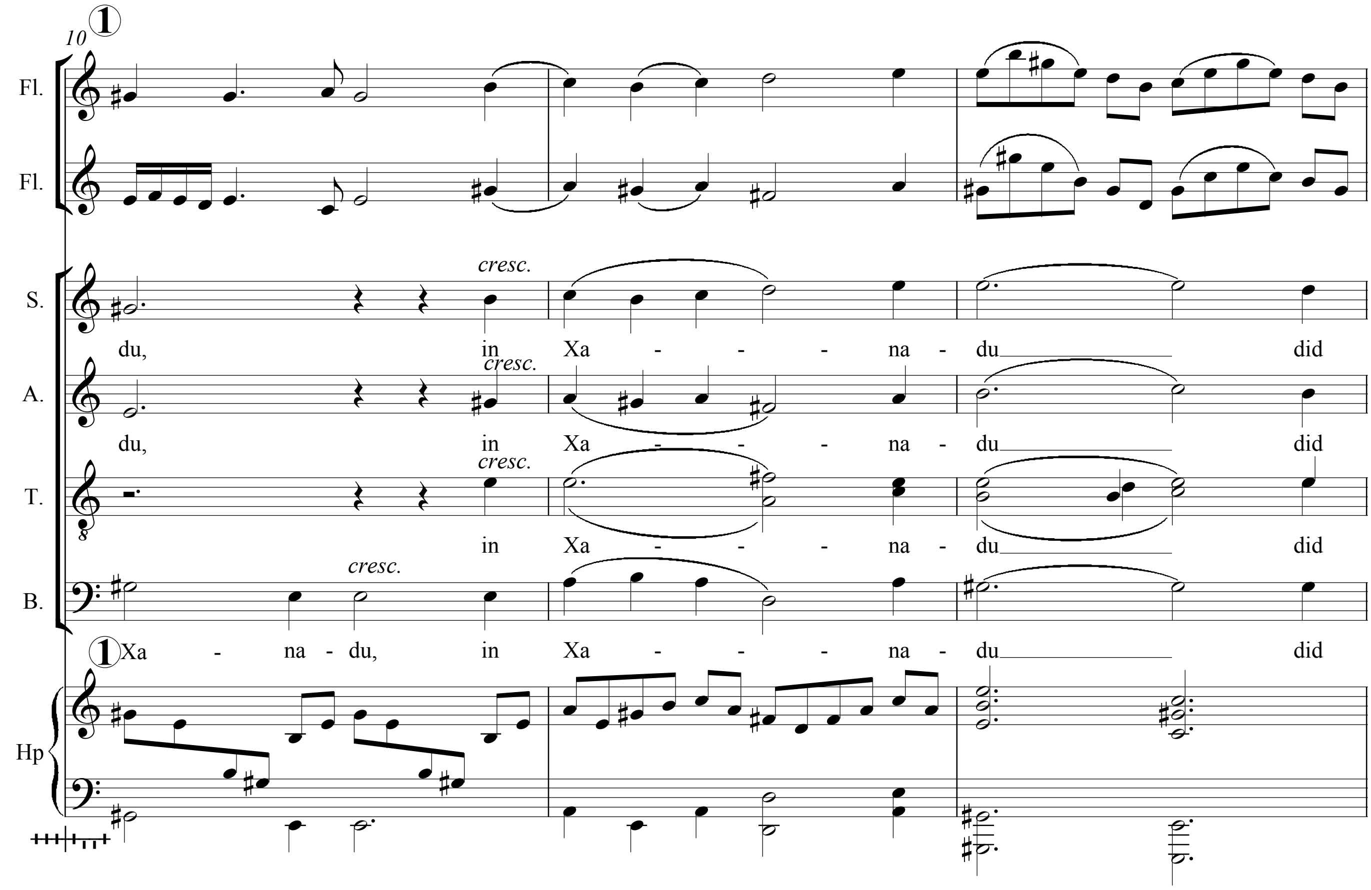
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1772–1834)

Philip Legge
(*1972)



December 16 2003, revised March 2005




10
1
Fl.
Fl.
S.
cresc.
du, in Xa - - - na - du did
A.
cresc.
du, in Xa - - - na - du did
T.
cresc.
in Xa - - - na - du did
B.
cresc.
Xa - na - du, in Xa - - - na - du did
1
Hp


13
Fl.
Fl.
f
f
S.
f
Ku - bla Khan A state - ly plea - sure - dome de -
A.
f
Ku - bla Khan A state - ly plea - sure - dome de -
T.
f
Ku - bla Khan A state - ly plea - sure - dome de -
B.
f
Ku - bla Khan A state - ly plea - sure - dome de -
8va
Hp
G♮
D♯
f
E♭ C♭ G♭
f
gliss.


17
2
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
mf
cree: Where Alph, the sa -cred ri - ver,_ ran Through ca -verns mea -sure - less_ to man
cree: Where Alph, the sa - cred ri - ver, ran Through ca - verns mea - sure - less to man
arpége
E♮, then C♮
D♮
mp
F♮, then G♮
F♯, then C♯
G♯, then C♮
22
mp
Down to a sun - less sea. So twice five miles of fer - tile ground With
Down to a sun - less sea. So twice five miles ground With
F♮
G♮


27
3
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
p
cresc.
walls and tow'rs were gird - dled round: And here were gar - dens bright with sin -
walls and tow'rs were gird - dled round:
walls and tow'rs were gird - dled round:
walls and tow'rs were gird - dled round:
C♯
G♯, C♮, then D♯
D♮
31
pp
ppp
- - u-ous rills Where blos - somed ma - ny an in - cense - bear - ing tree;
Where blos - somed ma - ny an in - cense - bear - ing tree;
Where blos - somed ma - ny an in - cense - bear - ing tree;
div.
And
And
G♮
G♯
G♮
G♯
F♯


36
4
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
mp
cresc.
div.
En - fol - ding sun - ny spots_ of green - e -
En - fol - ding sun - ny spots of green - e -
here were fo - rests an - cient as the hills,_ En - fol - ding sun - ny spots_ of green - e -
here were fo - rests an - cient as the hills,_ En - fol - ding sun - ny spots of green - e -
C♯, then D♯
D♮, then G♮
41
Allegro, broad in feeling, about 𝅗𝅥 = 108
Fl.
f
ry.
45
accel.
poco a poco cresc.
G♯
E♯


49
Vivace, about 𝅗𝅥 = 132
5
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
But o! that deep ro - man - tic cha - sm which
glissando mp
53
slant - ed Down the green hill a-thwart a ce - darn co - ver! A
slan - ted Down the green hill a-thwart a ce - darn co - ver! A
E♮
E♯

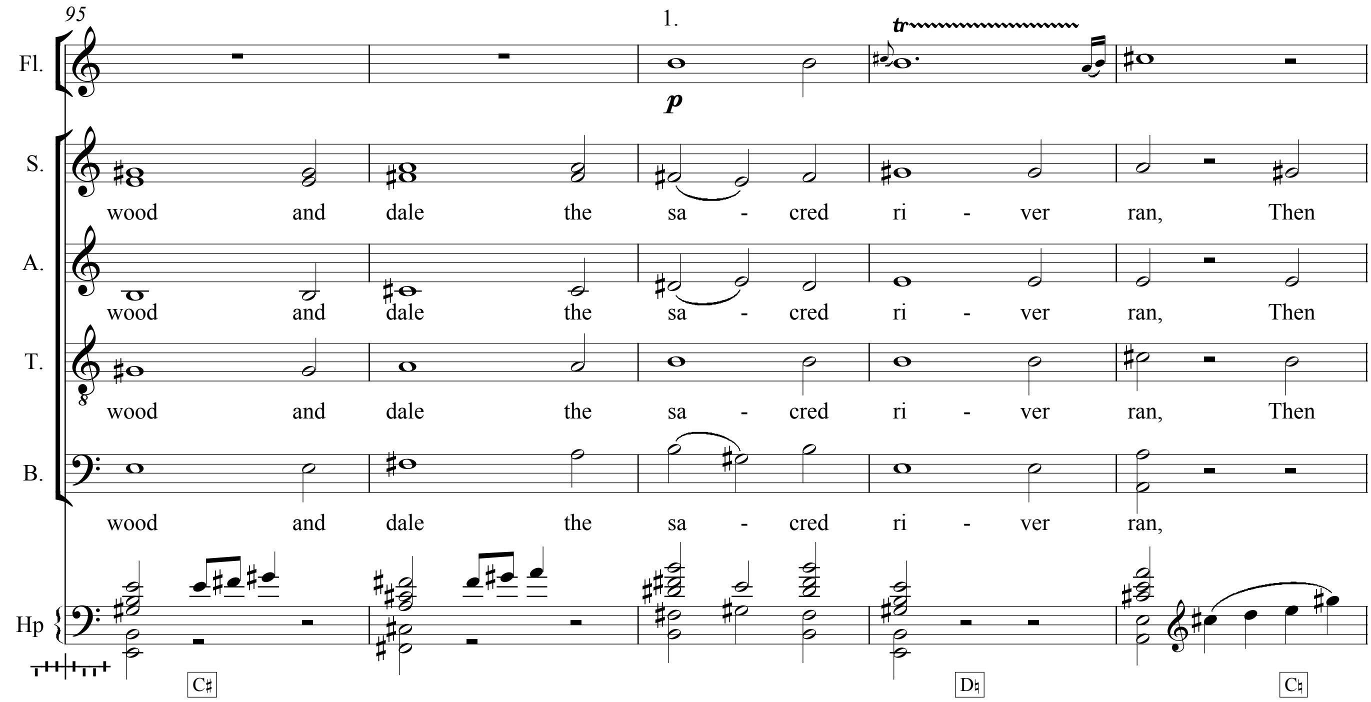

57
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
6
mp
sa - vage place! as ho - ly and en - chant - ed As
sa - vage place! as ho - ly and en - chant - ed As
sa - vage place! as ho - ly and en - chant - ed As
sa - vage place!
glissando mp
B♭ D♯
C♮ B♮
f
61
e'er be - neath a wa - ning moon was haunt - - ed By
e'er be - neath a wa - ning moon was haunt - - ed By
e'er be - neath a wa - ning moon was haunt - ed By
By
E♮ A♯ G♮ G♮ D♮ F♮

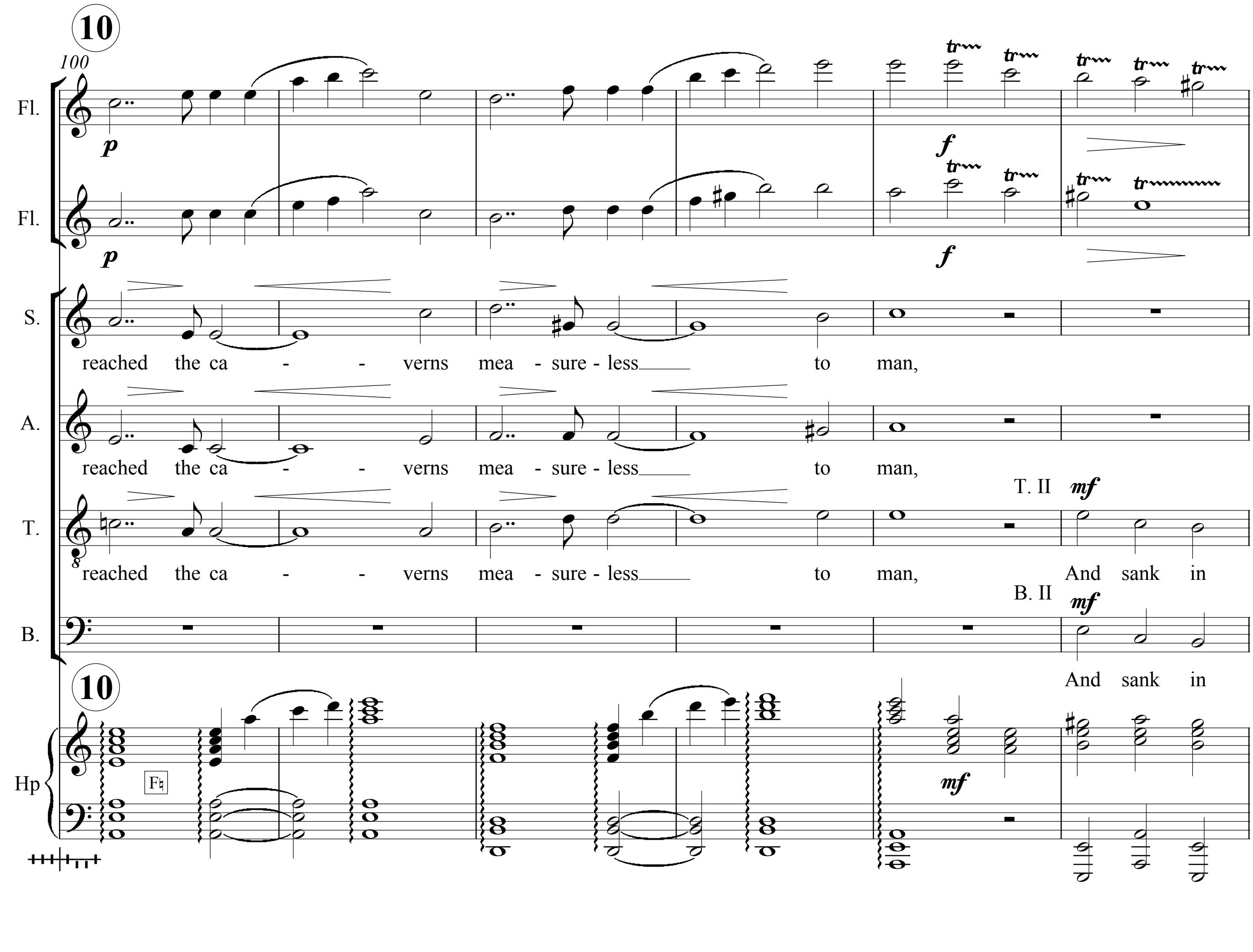

64
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
f
f
wo - - man wail - ing for her de - - - mon lo - - - ver!
wo - man wail - ing for her de - mon lo - - - ver!
wo - man wail - ing for her de - - - mon lo - - - ver!
wo - man wail - ing for her de - - - mon lo - - - ver!
G♯
G♮, D♯, F♯
dim.


68
7
Flutter.
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
mf dim.
mp dim.
p
p
p
And from this chasm, with cease - less tur - moil seeth - ing, As if this
And from this chasm, with cease - less tur - moil seeth - ing, As if this
7
p


72
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
Flutter.
mf
p subito
tr
earth in fast thick pants were breath - ing, A migh-ty foun - tain mo - ment - ly was forced;
A migh-ty foun - tain mo - ment - ly was forced;
F♯
D♯
G♯
G♮
77
1.
8
SOPRANOS
A - mid whose swift half - in - ter - mit - ted burst Huge frag - ments vault-ed like re-bound-ing
82
hail,
And 'mid these danc - ing rocks at once and
Or chaff - y grain be - neath the thresh - er's flail:
G♯
G♮


87
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
poco rit.
Meno allegro, about 𝅗𝅥 = 120
9
cresc.
f
mp
e-ver It flung up mo - ment-ly the sa - cred ri - ver.
It flung up mo - ment-ly the sa - cred ri - ver.
F♯
D♯
G♯
F♮
91
p
Five miles me - an - der-ing with a ma - zy mo - tion Through
Through


95
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
1.
tr
p
wood and dale the sa - cred ri - ver ran, Then
wood and dale the sa - cred ri - ver ran, Then
wood and dale the sa - cred ri - ver ran, Then
wood and dale the sa - cred ri - ver ran,
C♯
D♮
C♮


10
100
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
p
f
tr
reached the ca - - verns mea - sure - less to man,
reached the ca - - verns mea - sure - less to man,
reached the ca - - verns mea - sure - less to man, And sank in
T. II
mf
B. II
mf
And sank in
F♮
mf


106
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
tr
p
pp
And 'mid this
T.I: And 'mid this
tu - mult to a life - less o - cean: And 'mid this
B.I: And 'mid this
G♮
tremelo rap.
11
110
cresc.
f
tu - - mult Ku - - bla heard from far An - cest - ral
unis.
G♯
C♯
F♯
A♯
A♮
C♮
F♮


Wild,
then…
Fl.
Fl.
Flutter.
S.
A.
T.
B.
voi - ces pro - phe - sy - ing war!
voi - ces pro - phe - sy - ing war!
voi - ces pro - phe - sy - ing war!
voi - ces pro - phe - sy - ing war!
Wild,
then…
Hp
G♮
F♯
Alla marcia (metronomic and slower)
12
Losing momentum
Fl.
Fl.
S.
Alla marcia (metronomic and slower)
12
Losing momentum
Hp


123
Fl.
Fl.
SOPRANOS
S.
Hp
Slower, languid, about 𝅗𝅥 = 80
p
dim.
D♯
G♯
F♮
The
127
13
sha - - dow of the dome of plea - sure
C♯
F♯
C♮
131
Float - - ed mid - way on the waves:
ALTOS
A.
Where was
C♯
F♮
F♯
A♯
E♯
E♮


135
Fl.
Fl.
A.
heard the ming - led mea - sure From the foun - tain and the caves.
Hp
A♮
139
14
Fl.
Fl.
SOPRANOS
S.
It was a mi - ra - cle of rare de - vice, A
14
Hp
C♮
C♯
143
Fl.
1.
p
Fl.
S.
sun - ny plea - sure dome with caves of ice!
Hp
G♮



* Abora: the composer suggests the first syllable is sung with a long “A”, as in “arbor” (but with as little or no hint of an “r” before the next syllable).


17
170
A little slower, ♩ = 100
Slower again, ♩ = 80
Fl.
Fl.
S. solo
Could I re - vive with-in me Her sym - pho-ny and song, To such a deep de - light 'twould
TUTTI
S.
TUTTI
A.
TUTTI
T.
Could I re-vive with-in me Her sym-
TUTTI
B.
Could I re -vive
Hp
176
18
win me
Could I re - vive with-in me
Could I re - vive with-in me Her sym - pho-ny and song,
pho-ny and song, To such a deep de - light 'twould win me, Could I re -
with-in me Her sym - pho-ny and song, To such a deep de - light 'twould win me,

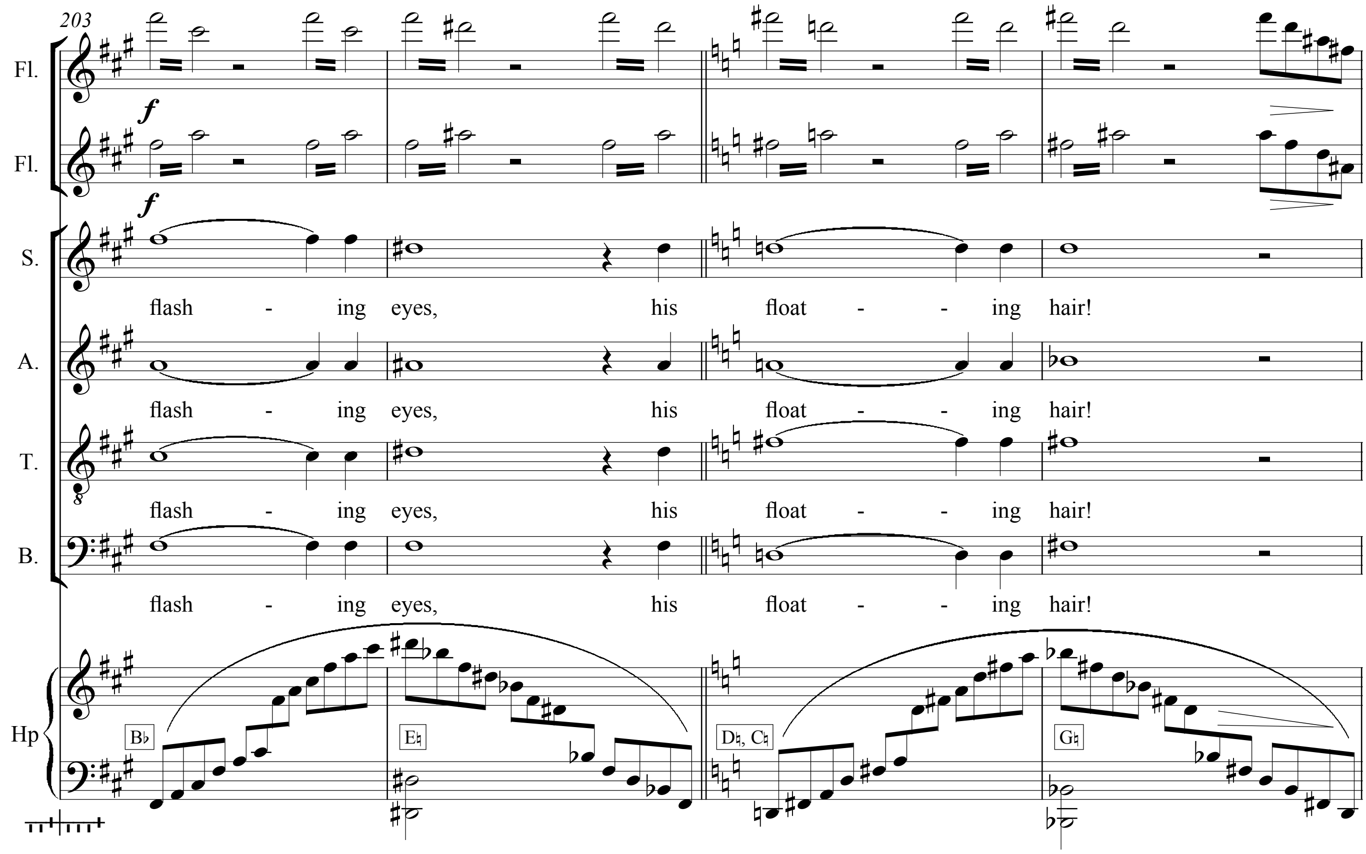

181
Fl.
Fl.
S.
Her sym - pho-ny and song, To such a deep de-light, 'twould win
A.
To such a deep de - light 'twould win me, To such a deep de-
T.
vive with-in me Her sym - pho-ny and song, To such a deep de - light, to such de-
B.
Could I re - vive with-in me Her sym - pho-ny and
Hp
F♯
F♮
F♯


185
Slightly faster, about ♩ = 88
accel.
Fl.
cresc.
Fl.
cresc.
S.
cresc.
me, to such a deep de - light, to such a deep de - light, to such a deep de-
A.
cresc.
light, to such a deep de -light, to such a deep de - light, to
T.
cresc.
light, to such a deep de -light, to such a deep de - light, to
B.
cresc.
song, to such a deep de - light, to such a deep de - light, to such a deep de-
Slightly faster, about ♩ = 88
accel.
Hp
mf
D♯
D♮
C♯
cresc.
D♯
G♯


188
Allegro, about 𝅗𝅥 = 108
19
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
light 'twould win me
such a deep de - light 'twould win me
such a deep de - light 'twould win me
light 'twould win me
B♯
E♯
191
S. solo
That with mus - ic loud and long, I would build that dome in_ air,
8va
D♮
E♮



* Do not give in to the illusory appearance of the choir singing in $\frac{6}{4}$


203
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
f
f
flash - ing eyes, his float - - ing hair!
flash - ing eyes, his float - - ing hair!
flash - ing eyes, his float - - ing hair!
flash - ing eyes, his float - - ing hair!
B♭
E♮
D♮, C♮
G♮


207
21
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
p
Weave a cir - cle round him thrice, And close your eyes with ho - ly dread, For
Weave a cir - cle round him thrice, And close your eyes with ho - ly dread, For
Weave a cir - cle round him thrice… with ho - ly dread, For
Weave a cir - cle round… with dread, For
A♭, F♮
F♯
E♭
C♭


211
Fl.
Fl.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Hp
mp
cresc.
tr
mf
he on ho - - ney - dew hath fed, and drunk
E♮, B♮
C♮
A♮, D♯
C♯
A♭
215
22
the milk of Pa - ra - dise.
niente
p
pp
G♯, F♮
dim.
221
poco rit.
Tempo
ppp
Camberwell
27 May 2004